

A D V I C E

1607/592  
TO THE

P E O P L E

CALLED

M E T H O D I S T S,

WITH REGARD TO

D R E S S .

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L O N D O N :

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## ADVICE CONCERNING DRESS.

I. 1. **I** Am not fond of saying the same thing over and over: especially when I have so many things to say, that the day of life (which with *me* is far spent) is not likely to suffice for them. But in some cases, it is needful for *you* that I should: and then it is not grievous to me. And it may be best to speak freely and fully at once, that there may be the less need of speaking on this head hereafter.

2. When we look into the Bible with any attention, and then look round into the world, to see who *believes*, and who *lives* according to this book; we may easily discern, that the system of *practice*, as well as the system of *truth* there delivered, is torn in pieces, and scattered abroad, like the members of Absyrtus. Every denomination of Christians retains some part either of Christian truth or practice: these hold fast one part, and those another, as their fathers did before them. What is the duty, mean time, of those who desire to follow the whole word of God? Undoubtedly to gather up all these fragments; that, if possible, nothing be lost: with all diligence to follow all those we see about us, so far as they follow the Bible: and to join together in one scheme of truth and practice, what almost all the world put asunder.

3. Many years ago, I observed several parts of Christian practice among the people called Quakers. Two things I particularly remarked among them, plainness of speech, and plainness of dress. I willingly adopted both with some restrictions, and particularly plainness of dress: the same I recommended to *you*, when God first called you out of the world; and after the addition of more than twenty years experience, I recommend it to you still.

4. But before I go any farther, I must intreat you, in the name of God, be open to conviction. Whatever prejudices you have contracted from education, custom, or example, divest yourselves of them, as far as possible. Be willing to receive light either

from God or man : do not shut your eyes against it. Rather, be glad to see more than you did before ; to have the eyes of your understanding opened. Receive the truth in the love thereof, and you will have reason to bless God for ever.

II. 1. Not that I would advise you to imitate the people called Quakers, in those little particularities of dress, which can answer no possible end, but to distinguish them from all other people. To be singular, merely for singularity's sake, is not the part of a christian. I do not therefore advise you to wear a hat of such dimensions, or a coat of a particular form. Rather, in things that are absolutely indifferent, that are of no consequence at all, humility and courtesy require you to conform to the customs of your country.

2. But I advise you to imitate them, First, in the neatness of their apparel. This is highly to be commended, and quite suitable to your Christian calling. Let all your apparel therefore be as clean, as your situation in life will allow. It is certain, the poor cannot be so clean as they would, as having little change of raiment. But let even these be as clean as they can, as care and diligence can keep them. Indeed they have particular need so to be ; because Cleanliness is one great branch of Frugality. It is likewise more conducive to health, than is generally considered. Let the poor then especially labour to be clean, and provoke those of higher rank to jealousy.

3. I advise you to imitate them, Secondly, in the *Plainness* of their apparel. In this are implied two things ; 1. That your apparel be cheap, not expensive ; far cheaper than others in your circumstances wear, or than *you* would wear, if you knew not God ; 2. That it be grave, not gay, airy, or showy ; not in the point of the fashion. And these easy rules may be applied both to the materials, whereof it is made, and the manner wherein it is made or put on.

4. Would you have a farther rule with respect to both ? Then take one, which you may always carry

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in your bosom: "Do every thing herein with a single eye;" and this will direct you in every circumstance. Let a single intention to please God prescribe, both what cloathing you shall buy, and the manner wherein it shall be made, and how you shall put on and wear it. To express the same thing in other words; let all you do, in this respect, be so done, that you may offer it to God, a sacrifice acceptable through Christ Jesus; so that, consequently, it may increase your reward, and brighten your crown in heaven. And so it will do, if it be agreeable to christian humility, seriousness, and charity.

5. Shall I be more particular still? Then I exhort all those, who desire me to watch over their souls, Wear no gold, (whatever officers of state may do; or magistrates, as the ensign of their office) no pearls or precious stones: use no curling of hair, or costly apparel, how grave soever. I advise those, who are able to receive this saying. Buy no velvets, no silks, no fine linen, no superfluities, no mere ornaments, though ever so much in fashion. Wear nothing, though you have it already, which is of a glaring colour, or which is in any kind gay, glittering, showy; nothing made in the very height of the fashion, nothing apt to attract the eyes of the bystanders. I do not advise women to wear rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, (of whatever kind or colour,) or ruffles, which by little and little may easily shoot out from one to twelve inches deep. Neither do I advise men, to wear coloured waistcoats, shining stockings, glittering or costly buckles or buttons, either on their coats, or in their sleeves, any more than gay, fashionable, or expensive perukes. It is true, these are little, very little things; therefore they are not worth defending: therefore give them up, let them drop, throw them away without another word. Else a little needle may cause much pain in your flesh, a little self-indulgence much hurt to your soul.

III. 1. For the preceding exhortation I have the authority of God in clear and express terms. "I will,



that women (and by parity of reason, men too) adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered (curled) hair, or gold, or pearls, (one kind of precious stones, which was then most in use, put for all,) or costly apparel, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Tim. ii. 10. Again, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting (curling) the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. Nothing can be more express: the wearing of gold, of precious stones, and of costly apparel, together with curling of hair, is here forbidden by name: nor is there any restriction made, either here, or in any other scripture. Whoever therefore says, "There is no harm in these things," may as well say, there is no harm in stealing, or adultery.

2. There is something peculiarly observable in the manner, wherein both St. Peter and St. Paul speak of these things. "Let not your adorning (says St. Peter) be that outward adorning; but let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." The latter clause is not added barely to fill up the sentence, but with strong and weighty reason. For there is a direct contrariety (as little as we may suspect it) between that outward, and this inward adorning: and that, both with regard to their source, and with regard to their tendency. As to their source, all that adorning springs from nature; a meek and quiet spirit from grace: the former, from conforming to our own will, and the will of man; the latter from conformity to the will of God. And as to their tendency, nothing more directly tends to destroy meekness and quietness of spirit than all that outward adorning, whereby we seek to commend ourselves to men, and not to God. For this cherishes all those passions and tempers, which overthrow the quiet of every soul, wherein they dwell.

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3. "Let them adorn themselves, saith St. Paul, not with curling of hair, or with gold, pearls, or costly apparel, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." The latter clause is here likewise added for plain and weighty reasons. For

1. That kind of adorning cannot spring from godliness, from either the love or fear of God, from a desire of conforming to his Will, or from the Mind which was in Christ Jesus. 2. It no way tends to increase godliness; it is not conducive to any holy temper. But 3. It manifestly tends to destroy several of the tempers most essential to godliness. It has no friendly influence on humility; whether we aim at pleasing others or ourselves hereby. Either in one case or the other, it will rather increase pride or vanity, than lowliness of heart. It does not at all minister to the seriousness, which becomes a sinner born to die. It is utterly inconsistent with simplicity: no one uses it merely to please God. Whoever acts with a single eye, does all things to be seen and approved of God; and can no more dress, than he can pray, or give alms, to be seen of men.

4. "O! but one may be as humble in velvet and embroidery, as another is in sackcloth." True: for a person may wear sackcloth, and have no humility at all. The heart may be filled with pride and vanity, whatever the raiment be. Again; women under the yoke of unbelieving parents or husbands, as well as men in office, may, on several occasions, be constrained to put on gold or costly apparel. And in cases of this kind, plain experience shews, that the baleful influence of it is suspended. So that, whenever it is not our choice, but our cross, it may consist with godliness, with a meek and quiet spirit, with lowliness of heart, with christian seriousness. But it is not true, that any one can chuse this from a single eye to please God; or, consequently, without sustaining great loss, as to lowliness and every other christian temper.

5. But however this be, can you be adorned at the same time with costly apparel, and with good works?

works? That is, in the same degree as you might have been, had you bestowed less cost on your apparel? You know this is impossible: the more you expend on the one, the less you have to expend on the other. Costliness of apparel, in every branch, is therefore immediately, directly, inevitably destructive of good works. You see a brother, for whom Christ died, ready to perish for want of needful clothing. You would give it him gladly; but alas! "It is corban, whereby he might have been profited." It is given already, not indeed for the service of God, not to the treasury of the temple; but either to please the folly of others, or to feed vanity, or the lust of the eye in yourself. Now, (even suppose these were harmless tempers, yet) what an unspeakable loss is this, if it be really true, that "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour!" If there is indeed a reward in heaven for every work of faith, for every degree of the labour of love!

2dly. 1. As to the advice subjoined, it is easy to observe, that all those smaller things are, in their degree, liable to the same objections as the greater. If they are gay, showy, pleasing to the eye, the putting them on does not spring from a single eye to please God. It neither flows from, nor tends to advance a meek and quiet spirit. It does not arise from, nor any way promote real, vital godliness.

2. And if they are in any wise costly, if they are purchased with any unnecessary expence, they cannot but, in proportion to that expence, be destructive of good works. Of consequence, they are destructive of that charity, which is fed thereby; hardening our heart against the cry of the poor and needy, by inuring us to shut up our bowels of compassion toward them.

3. At least, all unnecessary expences of this kind, whether small or great, are senseless and foolish. This we may defy any man living to get over, if he allows there is another world. For there is no reward in heaven for laying out your money in ornaments, or costly apparel: whereas you may have an

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an eternal reward, for whatever you expend on earth.

4. Consider this more closely. Here are two ways proposed of laying out such a sum of money. I may lay it out in expensive apparel for myself, or in necessary cloathing for my neighbour. The former will please my own eye, or that of others; the latter will please God. Now suppose there were no more harm in one than in the other, in that which pleases man, than in that which pleases God: is there as much good in it? If they are equally innocent, are they equally wise? By the one, I gratify the desire of the eye, and gain a pleasure that perishes in the using: by the other, I gain a larger share of those pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. By the former, I obtain the applause of man; by the latter, the praise of God. In this way, I meet with the admiration of fools: in that, I hear from the Judge of all, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

5. Brethren, whatever ye are accounted by men, I would not have you fools in God's account, "Walk ye circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise;" not in those ways which God may possibly forgive, (to put things in the most favourable light;) but in those which he will certainly reward. "In wickedness be ye children still; but in understanding be ye men." I want to see a visible body of people, who are a standing example of this wisdom; a pattern of doing all things, great and small, with an eye to God and eternity.

IV. 1. But we may be assured, the wisdom of the world will find out abundance of objections to this. Accordingly, it is objected, first, "If God has given us plentiful fortunes, if we are placed in the higher ranks of life, we must act suitable to our fortune. We ought then to dress according to our rank, that is, in gold or costly apparel." Not to insist, that none of you are of this rank; I answer, where is this written? Our Saviour once occasionally said, Behold, they who wear gorgeous (splendid)

did) apparel, are in king's courts: but he does not say, they ought to be even there; he neither enjoins, nor countenances it. And where is this either enjoined or allowed by him or any of his apostles? Bring me plain, scriptural proof for your assertion, or I cannot allow it.

2. "But did not God give express command by *Moses*, that some even among his chosen people should be adorned in the most exquisite manner, with gold and precious stones and costly array?" Indeed he did: he expressly commanded this with regard to *Aaron*, and his successors in the high priesthood. But to this I answer first, this direction which God gave, with regard to the Jewish high-priest, can certainly affect no person in *England*, unless the Archbishop of *Canterbury*. And I apprehend, he does not plead the precedent. Secondly, the Jews and we are under different dispensations. The glory of the whole Mosaic dispensation was chiefly visible and external: whereas the glory of the christian dispensation is of an invisible and spiritual nature.

3. "But what then are gold and precious stones for? Why have they a place in the creation?" What if I say, I cannot tell? There are abundance of things in the creation, which I do not know the use of. What are crocodiles, lions, tigers, scorpions for? Why have so many poisons a place in the creation? Some of them are for medicine: but whatever they are for, they are certainly not to be used in such a manner as God has expressly forbidden.

4. "But if they were not thus adorned, kings and generals would be despised by their subjects and soldiers." Supposing they would, that is nothing to *you*; for you are neither kings nor generals. But it is absolutely certain, they would not, if they were not despised on other accounts. If they are valiant and wise, they will never be despised for the plainness of their dress. Was ever general or king more esteemed or beloved by his subjects and soldiers, than king *Charles* of *Sweden*? And 'tis  
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sure, he wore no gold or costly apparel, not so much as a common officer.

5. "But if all men were to dress like him, how would tradesmen live?" I answer, 1. God certainly considered this, or ever he gave these commands. And he would never have given them, had he not seen, that if they were universally observed, men in general would live better than they otherwise could; better in this world, as well as that to come. But, 2. there is no danger at all, that they should be universally observed. Only a little flock in any civilized nation will observe them, till the knowledge of God covers the earth. 3. If those who do observe them, employ the money they thus save in the most excellent manner, then a part of what before only served to fat a few rich tradesmen for hell, will suffice to feed and clothe and employ many poor, that seek the kingdom of heaven. 4. And *how* will those tradesmen themselves *live*? They will live like men, by honest labour, most of whom before live like swine, wallowing in all gluttony and sensuality. But, 5. This is all mere trifling. It is only a copy of your countenance. For it is not this, it is not a regard to trade, or the good of the nation, that makes you disobey God. No: it is pride, vanity, or some other sinful temper, which is the real cause of these sinful actions.

6. "But we cannot carry on our own trade without dressing like other people." If you mean only conforming to those customs of your country, that are neither gay, nor costly, why should you not "dress like other people?" I really think you should. Let an Englishman dress like other Englishmen; not like a Turk or a Tartar. Let an English woman dress like other English women; not like a French woman or a German. But if you mean "conformity to them in what God has forbidden," the answer is ready at hand. If you can't carry on your trade without breaking God's command, you must not carry it on. But I doubt the fact: I know no trade which may not be carried on by one who uses plain and modest apparel. I fear, therefore,  
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this too is but a copy of your countenance : you love these things, and therefore think them necessary. Your heart carries away your judgment : if you were not fond of them, you would never dream of their necessity.

7. In one single case these things may be necessary, that is, unavoidable ; namely, that of women who are under the yoke of self-willed, unreasonable husbands or parents. Such may be constrained to do in some degree, what otherwise they would not. And they are blameless herein, if 1. They use all possible means, arguments, intreaties, to be excused from it : and when they cannot prevail, 2. Do it just so far as they are constrained, and no farther.

V. 1. And now, brethren, what remains, but that I beseech you, who are not under the yoke, who are under God, the directors of your own actions, to set prejudice, obstinacy, fashion aside ; and yield to scripture, to reason, to truth. Suppose, as some affirm, you acted on no higher motive than to please me herein, I know not that you would have need to be ashamed ; even this you might avow in the face of the sun. You owe something to me : perhaps it is not my fault, if ye owe not your souls also. If then you did an indifferent thing only on this principle, not to give me any uneasiness, but to oblige, to comfort me in my labour, would you do much amiss ? How much more may you be excused in doing what I advise, when truth, reason and scripture advise the same ? When the thing in question is not an indifferent thing, but clearly determined by God himself ?

2. Some years ago, when I first landed at Savannah in Georgia, a gentlewoman told me, " I assure you, Sir, you will see as well-drest a congregation on Sunday, as most you have seen in London." I did so : and soon after I took occasion to expound those scriptures which relate to dress, and to press them freely upon my audience, in a plain and close application. All the time that I afterward ministered at Savannah, I saw neither gold in the church, nor costly apparel. But the congregation in general was almost



almost constantly cloathed in plain, clean linen or woollen.

3. And why should not my advice, grounded on scripture and reason, weigh with *you* as much as with them? I will tell you why, 1. You are surrounded with the saints of the world, persons fashionably, reputably religious. And these are constant opposers of all, who would go farther in religion than themselves. These are continually warning you against running into extremes, and striving to beguile you from the simplicity of the gospel. 2. You have near you still more dangerous enemies than these, Antinomians, whether *German* or *English*: who when any christian practice is enforced, come in with the cuckoo's note, "the law, the law;" and while they themselves glory in their shame, make you ashamed of what should be your glory. 3. You have suffered by false teachers of our own, who undermined the doctrine you had received: negatively, in public, by not insisting upon it, by not exhorting you to dress as persons professing godliness: (and, not to speak *for* a christian duty, is in effect to speak *against* it :) and positively, in private, either by jesting upon your exactness in observing the scripture-rule, or by insinuations, which if you did not mind them then, yet would afterward weaken your soul.

4. You have been, and are at this day *in perils among false brethren*: I mean, not only those of other congregations, who count *strictness* all one with *bondage*; but many of our own; in particular those, who were once clearly convinced of the truth; but they have sinned away that conviction themselves, and now endeavour to harden others against it: at least, by example: by returning again to the folly, from which they were once clean escaped. But what is the example of all mankind, when it runs counter to scripture and reason? I have warned you a thousand times not to regard any example, which contradicts reason or scripture. If it ever should be (pray that it may not be; but if it ever should) that I or my brother, my wife, or

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his, or all of us together, should set an example contrary to scripture and reason ; I intreat you, regard it not at all ; still let scripture and reason prevail.

5. You who have passed the morning, perhaps the noon of life, who find the shadows of the evening approach, set a better example to those that are to come, to the now-rising generation. With you the day of life is far spent : the night of death is at hand. You have no time to lose : see that you redeem every moment that remains. Remove every thing out of the way, be it ever so small (though indeed gay or costly apparel is not so) that might any ways obstruct your lowliness and meekness, your seriousness of spirit, your single intention to glorify God, in all your thoughts and words and actions. Let no needless expence hinder your being in the highest degree you possibly can, "rich in good works ; ready to distribute, willing to communicate," till you are clothed with glory and immortality.

Our carcases will soon fall into the dust ; then let the survivors adorn them with flowers. Mean time let us regard those ornaments only, that will accompany us into eternity.

6. You that are in the morning of your days, either your form is agreeable, or it is not. If it is not, do not make your person remarkable ; rather let it lie hid in common apparel. On every account, it is your wisdom to recommend yourself to the eye of the mind : but especially to the eye of God, who reads the secrets of your hearts, and in whose sight the incorruptible ornaments alone are of great price. But if you would recommend yourself by dress, is any thing comparable to plain neatness ? What kind of persons are those, to whom you could be recommended by gay or costly apparel ? None that are any way likely to make you happy : this pleases only the filliest and worst of men. At most, it gratifies only the filliest and worst principle in those who are of a nobler character.

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To you, whom God has intrusted with a more pleasing form, those ornaments are quite needless,

“ The adorning thee with so much art  
Is but a barbarous skill ;  
’Tis like the poisoning of a dart,  
Too apt before to kill.”

That is, to express ourselves in plain English, without any figure of poetry, it only tends to drag them faster into death everlasting, who were going fast enough before, by additional provocations to lust, or at least, inordinate affection. Did you actually *design* to raise either of these, in those who looked upon you? What! while you and they were in the more immediate presence of God? What profaneness and inhumanity mixt together! But if you designed it not, did you not *foresee* it? You might have done so without any extraordinary sagacity.—“ Nay, I did not care or think about it.” And do you say this by way of excuse? You *scatter abroad arrows, firebrands and death*; and do not care or think about it!

8. O let us walk more charitably and more wisely for the time to come! Let us all cast aside from this very hour, whatever does not become men and women professing godliness; whatever does not spring from the love and fear of God, and minister thereto. Let our seriousness shine before men, not our dress: let all who see us, know that we are not of this world. Let our adorning be that which fadeth not away, even righteousness and true holiness. If ye regard not weakening my hands and grieving my spirit, yet grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Do you ask, “ But what shall I do with the gay or costly apparel, and with the ornaments I have already? Must I suffer them to be lost? Ought I not to wear them now I have them?” I answer, there is no loss like that of using them; wearing them is the greatest loss of all. But what then shalt thou do with them? Burn them rather than wear them; throw them into the depth of the sea

sea. Or if thou canst with a clear conscience, sell them, and give the money to them that want. But buy no more at the peril of thy soul. Now be a faithful steward. After providing for those of thine own household things needful for life and godliness, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the sick, the prisoner, the stranger, with all that thou hast. —Then shall God clothe thee with glory and honour, in the presence of men and angels: and thou shalt “shine as the brightness of the firmament, yea, as the stars for ever and ever.”



F I N I S.



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